DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 188 118 CS 005 453

AUTHOR Trevino, Consuelo; Wise, Bette
TITLE Summer Acceptance Program: A Viable Option For Provisional Students Entering a Private University.
PUB DATE Mar 80
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western College Reading Association (13th, San Francisco, CA, March 27-30, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Blacks; Career Awareness; *College Preparation; *Developmental Studies Programs; Higher Education; Mexican Americans; *Minority Groups; Program Descriptions; Reading Programs; *School Holding Power; *Study Skills; Summer Programs; Whites; *Writing (Composition)

ABSTRACT

A five-week summer program for special acceptance students has been developed at St. Mary's University of San Antonio, Texas. Students accepted into the program must show high potential in the form of good high school grades or high test results. The special acceptance program has three components. The academic skills component is a three hour noncredit course designed to improve reading comprehension, speed, and study skills. The second component is a college orientation and career awareness group that includes individual counseling. The third component is the regular freshman English course, which must be successfully completed in the summer. Students who do not complete the Special Acceptance Program are not permitted to enroll the following term. Participants' academic and retention profiles indicate that the provisional students have succeeded academically and nearly half of the first group completed four years of college, while ninety percent of the 1979 participants are completing their first year of studies. The program has served the minority population especially well, since sixty percent of the students have been Mexican American and eight percent have been Black. (MKM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Consuelo Trevino
Bette Wise

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED188118

Summer Acceptance Program: A Viable Option For Provisional Students Entering A Private University

by: Consuelo Trevino and Bette Wise

Do high potential students with an uneven academic preparation, belong in private universities? What measures can private universities that want to admit these provisional students take to ensure their success? What are these provisional students' chances for success in highly competitive academic environments? These are but a few questions that will be addressed in this paper.

After intensive deliberation, St. Mary's Universitys' administration affirmed that there was, indeed a place for provisional students to pursue their education in a private, catholic university. The private universities' characteristics that lend themselves to facilitating the provisional students' potential for success include smaller teacher-student ratios, positive community atmosphere on campus and peer group support to name a few.

St. Mary's University of San Antonio is a private coeducational institution founded by the Catholic teaching order of Brothers of Mary. It is located in the heart of Southwest Texas, in a city which boasts a large junior district, a growing state university and 4 private colleges.

Total enrollment at St. Mary's in the Fall of 1979 was 3,374 including the graduate school and law school. Hispanics represent 31% of the enrollment and blacks make up 4%. The incoming Freshman numbered 335, of which 103 were considered provisional freshmen. The 1979 figures are representative of previous years.

Far from being an "open admissions" college, St. Mary's criteria for admissions is a 19 composite on the ACT and a rank of upper half of the graduating class, or 900 on the SAT and a rank of upper half of the graduating class.

Using Advanced Institutional Development Program Federal grant monies, St. Mary's University established the Special Acceptance Program in 1974. The program was implemented and was subsequently broadened, to directly assist provisional students to improve their chances for academic success. In the original Summer

CS005453

Program, provisional students were required to enroll in an English and in an Academic Skills courses to comply with admissions policies. This program was broadened in 1975 to include a comprehensive counseling component for participants.

Special Acceptance Program participants are identified and selected by the Office of Admissions. The program participants are identified as having academic potential, as evidenced by their overall high school performance, but as students who need a summer head start in order to optimize their successful transition into a University setting. Although ranked in the top half of their graduating classes, the Special Acceptance students, typically perform below average in their entrance test results. Their entrance test results range between a 13 - 18 in the ACT composite score, or between 740 - 895 in the SAT composite score. Students who perform well in their entrance test results, (19 + ACT) or (900 + SAT), but who perform below average (C - D+) in their high school programs, are also selected by our Admissions Office to participate in the Special Acceptance Program.

The thrust of the Special Acceptance Program is three fold. First of all, the program is designed to assist provisional students to improve their chances for academic success by providing them with academic skills assistance. This component attempts to upgrade the participants' reading level to 13th grade+ and to improve their reading comprehension to 80% level by the completion of the five week summer program. Secondly, the program is designed to assist provisional students to improve their retention to an 85% level during their first semester, a high attrition time for provisional students. This is attempted with the implementation of a comprehensive counseling program including a College Orientation/ Career Development group. This group provides the students with academic, career and personal support assistance. The third and final thrust of the Special Acceptance Program is to prepare provisional students to compete in a University environment by requiring them to take, and to successfully pass, a regular three hour freshman English course during that same summer term.

Incidently, the personnel from each component, including the admissions staff, meet regularly to assess the provisional students' progress and to deal with problem areas.

Successful completion of the three hour English course, the non-credit Academic Skills course, and the College Orientation Career Development Counseling group components entitles provisional students to full time acceptance at St. Mary's University in the fall semester immediately following the summer program. These Special Acceptance program participants who enroll at St. Mary's University, after successfully completing the Summer Program, are required to limit their course selection to 12 hours this first semester. The students are also encouraged to meet with the program counselor at least three times during the first term. Long term counseling follow-up is conducted on a basis of need or request.

Students who do not complete the Special Acceptance Program and are consequently not permitted to enroll at St. Mary's University the following term, receive supportive counseling services to assist them to clarify their educational directions. These students are encouraged to attend a Junior College so that they can strengthen their academic foundations. They are encouraged to re-apply to St. Mary's University after they have mastered their basic academic foundations. This recommendation is based on the premise that these students will have a better chance to succeed in a Junior College that offers a wider range of preparatory courses. In a Junior College these students will acquire the basics and a greater self confidence, thereby increasing their potential to persist in their educational endeavor, be it at St. Mary's, or at another institution.

The Academic Skills component is a three hour non-credit course designed to improve reading comprehension, speed, and study skills.

Reading instruction is developmental rather than remedial and concentrates on the patterns of non-fiction communication and reasoning ability. Students gain practice in transferring these skills to writing, thus reinforcing textbook note-taking.

In addition to techniques and practice in taking lecture notes, students are introduced to learning theory and its application to college courses. Time management, listening skills, memorization principles and test taking strategies are studied and practiced.

Those students needing remedial assistance in the basic skills meet on an individual basis after class with the instructor to correct these deficiences before the fall semester.

Students take regular quizzes on the study skills material and are required to write two essays on related topics. Additionally, the student is observed for motivation, seriousness of intent and maturity for university challenges. Therefore, the Pass/No Pass grade is arrived at both objectively and subjectively.

In the College Orientation and Career Awareness Group, the students receive information about University policies, academic programs, and degree plan options. Activities are conducted to help them assess their interests, abilities, values and attitudes, and to help them focus on career alternatives. Lectures are conducted in the areas of problem solving, goal setting, and decision making styles. Students become informed about student services such as testing, placement, and library facilities from members of the University Community. The students also receive valuable information about college life from former program participants in the Orientation group.

In addition to the structured group component, all group participants receive individual counseling services designed to help them to clarify their personal concerns and to develop their course plans. In order to optimize student academic success, and thereby improve their retention, students are encouraged to select courses within their degree plan that correlate with their skills and abilities. Students whose grades show a deficiency in an area are advised to remedy the deficiency by taking a refresher course before enrolling for the credited course.

The English component is taught by St. Mary's University English faculty, and the program participants are required to adhere to all the freshman English course

requirements. Successful completion (C or above) of five, five hundred-word themes, and the completion of a five hundred word theme as a final exam, are mandatory. The English faculty is instrumental in assisting the students to succeed academically by providing the students with individualized assistance, by giving them daily performance feedback, and, just as importantly, by providing them with encouragement and moral support. The faculty's contribution can be illustrated in numerous ways. A typical example is one where a student who enters the English course, feeling inadequate and negative, completes the English course with improved writing skills and with a new-found confidence in his/her overall academic potential.

The Special Acceptance Longitudinal Study was conducted to ascertain the degree of success that the program participants achieved at St. Mary's University. The key factors that were examined in this study included the participants high school grade point averages, their high school rank, and their ACT composite scores. A performance and a retention profile of the program participants were also ascertained in this study.

Before discussing the study results, let's review a demographic overview of the program participants. A total of 363 students participated in the Special Acceptance Program between 1974 and 1978. Data from these 363 students was used for this study. Although data for the 1979 program participants was not part of the original study, these students' Fall 1979 grade point average distributions, and their current retention are included in this report.

Of the 363 students who were part of this study, 202, or 56%, were male; 160, or 44%, were female. The ethnic background of the group showed that 220, or 60.6%, were Mexican Americans; 90, or 24.8%, were Anglo; 31, or 8.5% were Black; 22 or 6.1%, were from other ethnic backgrounds. The data further showed that 205, or 56.5%, of the students had graduated from public high schools; 104, or 28.7%, had graduated from private high schools; for 54, or 14.9%, of the students, this

information was not available.

The program participants' high school GPA median was 2.61. Black participants had a median high school GPA of 2.80; Mexican American participants had a median high school GPA of 2.70; while the Anglo participants had a median high school GPA of 2.50. Public high school participants had a median GPA of 2.80, while private high school program participants had a median GPA of 2.32.

The Special Acceptance participants' academic success at St. Mary's can be illustrated with this GPA profile table:

GROUPS	1st YEAR GPA	2nd YEAR GPA	3rd YEAR GPA	4th YEAR GPA
Median	2.14	2.30	2.44	2.69
N	324	181	93	50

As noted in this GPA profile table, the program participants' GPAs increased on a yearly basis. Fifty program participants completed four years of Studies at St. Mary's as of May 1979. Fifteen program participants will be graduating from St. Mary's this May. 13 will graduate summer or fall.

Even more indicative of the program participants success is a year-by-year retention profile. Of the 40 students who entered the program in 1974, nineteen, or 47.5%, of them completed four years of studies at St. Mary's. Thirty two, or 40.5%, of the 79 students who entered the program in 1975 completed four years of studies at St. Mary's, while 28, or 43.8%, of the 64 students who entered the program in 1976 did likewise. The 1977 program had an enrollment of 100 students. Of that group 48, or 48%, are currently enrolled at St. Mary's. The 1978 program

had an enrollment of 80 students. Forty four, or 55%, of that group are currently enrolled at St. Mary's. The 1979 program had an enrollment of 103 students. Their first semester GPA profile showed that 72 or 70% of the students had earned between a 2.00 and a 4.00, 12 or 12% had earned between a 1.71 and a 1.99 and 19 or 18% had been placed on probation. One hundred, or 97%, of the 1979 participants are presently completing their first year of studies at St. Mary's.

The participants' academic performance and retention profiles confirmed that the provisional students had succeeded academically at St. Mary's University. Another significant finding that was obtained in the study was in reference to the students' high school GPAs and their ACT composite scores. The finding showed that the participants' high school GPAs had a positive correlation to their college academic performance, while their ACT composite scores had a negative coorelation to their college academic performance.

In concluding this paper, it seems appropriate to refer back to the three questions that were mentioned in the papers' opening. Can high potential students with uneven academic preparations survive in private universities? This question, like the others that were addressed in this paper, can only be answered by the institution's administration. The St. Mary's administration affirmed that provisional students belonged at St. Mary's. The administration's support has been essential to the program's growth and success.

The Special Acceptance Program was the alternative that St. Mary's selected to assist provisional students to optimize their transition into a university setting. University personnel who would like their administration to consider adopting a similar alternative should consider the following preliminary questions: Why is the program needed? What will the program cost? How can the program be funded? Who will benefit from the program? And what will the University gain by implementing the program?

The St. Mary's administration addressed these very questions six years ago.

The administrators concluded that the program was needed for the following reasons; (a) the number of high potential students with uneven academic preparations seeking admittance to St. Mary's was increasing; (b) the enrollment competition with other area universities was increasing; and finally (c) the retention of students at St. Mary's was decreasing. The Special Acceptance Program was thus implemented to offer students an opportunity to obtain an education while maintaining the rigorous academic standards of St. Mary's.

At St. Mary's the direct cost of the Special Acceptance Program has been minimal when compared to the revenue that it has produced. The academic skills component is self supporting as the students pay for the course, and as the course instructor also functions as the Director of the Pre-Degree Program, a revenue making program. The English faculty is paid with the course revenues,and therefore incures no direct costs, while the counseling position is paid with federal grant monies. And finally, the admissions staff is anxious to provide an option for provisional students as part of their regular recruitment effort.

St. Mary's sought, and subsequently obtained, funds from the federal government to cover program operating costs. Regarding the question of who the program serves, at St. Mary's, the program has appeared to serve the minority population, a population which has typically been neglected by the overcrowded, ill-equipped urban public high schools of the local area.

St. Mary's has gained from the Special Acceptance Program in a variety of ways. The most significant area has been in St. Mary's accomplishing its mission, to serve the community.

If this paper serves to assist colleagues in considering alternatives to mainstreaming high potential students with uneven academic preparation into a university setting, it will have accomplished an important task.